

Healthy People Nevada 2020

Reno Gazette-Journal / RGJ.COM

Tuesday, July 26, 2011

“If you don’t know where you are going, you will wind up somewhere else.” Yogi Berra

How best can we advance the health of all Nevadans over the next decade and, at the same time, monitor our progress? A new report from the Nevada State Health Division – Healthy People Nevada: Moving from 2010 to 2020 – provides a comprehensive framework to assist state policy makers and public health advocates with answers to both questions.

For the past thirty years, the Healthy People initiative has set the country’s health-promotion and disease-prevention agenda by articulating population health goals and utilizing science-based benchmarks to track and monitor movement toward established health targets. The initiative has unified national dialogue and action on health matters by providing a public health roadmap and compass for the country.

For the past ten years, the Healthy People project has focused on increasing the quality of life for Americans, including longer lives free of preventable disease and disability, and eliminating health disparities. While life expectancy has increased for most age and social groups over the past decade, the goal of eliminating disparities remains largely unmet.

The current plan, Healthy People 2020, builds on past achievements and reaffirms two overarching goals of previous efforts – improving general health status and eliminating disparities in health – but also adds two additional goals: creating social and physical environments conducive to good health and promoting healthy development and healthy behaviors across all life stages.

Healthy People Nevada represents our state’s ongoing participation in the fourth-generation phase of the national initiative. It utilizes the objectives and targets contained in the recently updated national framework to provide a statewide assessment of the health status of Nevada.

The current Healthy People Nevada 2010-2020 report focuses on 25 of the 38 national priority areas, provides an overview of our state’s progress on previous Healthy People objectives, and summarizes the major public health challenges facing Nevada. Equally important, it contains a comprehensive inventory of best practices for addressing those challenges.

The report highlights a number of areas where Nevada has made progress in improving population health. Success stories include declining teen pregnancy rates, steady decreases in sexually transmitted diseases, and progress on infant and child mortality rates that surpassed Healthy People 2010 targets established over a decade ago.

The report also inventories numerous public health challenges and areas of concern that continue to face Nevada, including high percentages of uninsured children and adults under the age of 65, a near doubling of health care associated infections, and high rates of suicide and other mental illness.

In the end, Healthy People Nevada 2010-2020 provides a timely snapshot of the progress we've made as a state in promoting and protecting the public's health. It also documents the considerable amount of unfinished business that awaits state and local governments, health and human service providers, and, not the least, the residents of Nevada.

The Nevada report can be accessed at [http://health.nv.gov/HSPER\\_HP.htm](http://health.nv.gov/HSPER_HP.htm). To learn more about Healthy People 2020 visit <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/default.aspx>.

John Packham, PhD is Director of Health Policy Research at the University of Nevada School of Medicine and President Elect of the Nevada Public Health Association.